

Unintentional Injuries, Violence, and the Health of Young People

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Unintentional Injuries and Violence

Injuries include unintentional injuries (such as those caused by motor vehicle crashes and fires) and intentional injuries (violence and suicide).

- An injury is defined as “unintentional or intentional damage to the body resulting from acute exposure to thermal, mechanical, electrical, or chemical energy or from the absence of such essentials as heat or oxygen.”¹
- Injuries are not accidents. They can be prevented by changing the environment, individual behavior, products, social norms, legislation, and governmental and institutional policy.
- Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for people aged 1 to 34 years in the United States.²
- Injuries requiring medical attention, or resulting in restricted activity, affect more than 20 million children and adolescents (250 per 1,000 persons) and cost \$17 billion annually for medical treatment.³
- Violence is the “threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against one self, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or deprivation.”⁴

Leading Causes of Injury Mortality and Morbidity Among Children and Adolescents

- Approximately three-quarters of all deaths among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years result from injury-related causes: 50% from motor vehicle injuries (occupants and pedestrians combined), 13% from all other unintentional injuries, 11% from homicides, and 9% from suicides.⁵

Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries

- Among children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 years, 71% of unintentional injury deaths are due to motor vehicle crashes.⁵
- Traffic-related injuries also include those sustained while walking, riding a bicycle, or riding a motorcycle. Among bicycle-related deaths, 64% are caused by collisions with motor vehicles.⁵

Five Leading Causes of Death and Number of Deaths
United States, 2003, Ages 5-19

Rank	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19
1	Unintentional Injury 1,096	Unintentional Injury 1,522	Unintentional Injury 6,755
2	Malignant Neoplasms 516	Malignant Neoplasms 560	Homicide 1,938
3	Congenital Anomalies 180	Suicide 244	Suicide 1,487
4	Homicide 122	Congenital Anomalies 206	Malignant Neoplasms 690
5	Heart Disease 104	Homicide 202	Heart Disease 393

Source: WISQARS⁵



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Violence

- In the United States, minority males bear most of the burden of homicide victimization. In 2003, among males aged 15 to 19 years, the homicide rate was 3.6 per 100,000 among whites; 6.6 per 100,000 among Asian/Pacific Islanders; 18.9 per 100,000 among American Indian/Alaskan Natives; 26.6 per 100,000 among Hispanics; and 60.6 per 100,000 among Blacks.⁵
- In 2005, 17% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide, and 13% made a plan about how they would attempt suicide during the 12 months preceding the survey.⁶
- The United States child homicide rate, 2.6 per 100,000 for children less than 15 years of age, is five times greater than the combined rate of 25 other industrialized countries.⁷
- An estimated 302,100 women and 92,700 men are forcibly raped each year in the United States. More than half (54%) of the female rape victims were less than 18 years of age, and 22% were less than 12 years of age when they were first raped.⁸

**Five Leading Causes of Injury Death and Number of Injury Deaths
United States, 2003, Ages 5-19**

Rank	Ages 5-9	Ages 10-14	Ages 15-19
1	Motor Vehicle 597	Motor Vehicle 911	Motor Vehicle 5,169
2	Fire/Burn 137	Suicide/Suffocation 152	Homicide 1,587
3	Drowning 126	Drowning 142	Firearm 736
4	Other Land Transport 50	Homicide 139	Suicide/Suffocation 568
5	Homicide-Firearm 48	Other Land Transport 81	Poisoning 520

Source: WISQARS⁵

Context of Injury Occurrence

- Approximately 4 million children and adolescents are injured at school each year.³
- More than 1 million serious sports-related injuries occur each year to adolescents aged 10-17 years.⁹
- In 2003, firearms were the mechanism of injury in approximately 78% of homicides and 47% of suicides among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years.⁵
- From 1997 to 2002, 9,622 child passengers aged 0 to 14 years died in motor vehicle crashes. Of these children, 2,335 (24%) were killed in crashes involving drinking drivers, and 68% of the deaths occurred while the child was riding with the drinking driver.¹⁰

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